

Three Evangelical Models of Creation

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Introduction

Today's theological mentality shows signs of inability to recover from the shock caused by the scientific revolution. This revolution substituted science for theology as the source of answers to questions about the origin of life, i.e. the questions that perturb every human being. This radical shift came about because of a threefold attack during the latter half of the nineteenth century:

- (1) The challenge of the scientific community when Charles Darwin wrote his revolutionary *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). In his book, Darwin advanced a hypothesis of evolution to explain the origin of species.
- (2) The second challenge came from the German theological circles (more exactly, from the so-called *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), when Hermann Gunkel wrote his *Schoepfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung uber Gen 1 und Ap Jon 12* (1895). He argued that the Hebrew version of creation was just another ancient Near East folk-tale which, in the course of time, was improved by its transmitters' philosophical and theological insights.
- (3) The third challenge came from the German school of literary criticism. In 1878, Julius Wellhausen wrote his *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, where he argued that there were at least two distinct accounts of creation in Ge 1 and Ge 2, and that these two contradicted each another at various points.



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Since this time, any exegetical endeavors related to the creation accounts have been framed by the dialectic interaction between the thesis of the “order” observed in Ge 1 (or Ge 1:1-2:3) and Ge 1:1, and, on the opposite side, the antithesis of the “chaos” of Ge 2 (or Ge 2:4-25) and Ge 1:2. Such an approach has its own “existential” background: more than two thousand years of the Septuagint’s exposition consists of the “prior understanding” (a term of R. Bultmann) in this exegesis.

Even among evangelicals there is no clear agreement regarding the model of the creation. Bruce Waltke, the leading scholar in this research, observes: “Evangelicals agree that the Bible is the inspired word of God. And they reject in unison any approach that treats Scripture with a profound skepticism regarding its historical credibility. Yet when they read Genesis 1:1-2:3, there is anything but unanimity.”¹

In our article, we shall analyze the existing models of creation by means of the so-called “close reading” of the texts of Ge 1 and Ge 2, i.e., reading them in their inspired totality. We shall use the Hebrew texts as the basis designing for fourth, alternative model of creation, rather than the doctrine of creation (as was done, for example, by G. von Rad). We shall stand on the side of the confessional reader of the Bible, rather than on the side of the hypothetical “original author” of Genesis with its more hypothetical “Sitz im Leben” (as was done by H. Gunkel).

1. Three Evangelical Models of Creation in Ge 1:1-3

There are three models of creation currently discussed in evangelical circles: (1) the Gap (Restitution) Theory; (2) the Pre-creation Chaos Theory; and (3) the *Creatio ex Nihilo* Model.² Each model has been argued for by its proponents in connection with the syntactic peculiarities of Ge 1:1-3.³ The point which is common to all views is that Ge 1:2 consists of a description of the primeval cosmos in terms of watery “chaos.”⁴ According to the Gap Theory, the “chaos” of Ge 1:2 occurred immediately after God’s perfect creation of the universe described in Ge 1:1. The Pre-creation Chaos Theory, on the other hand, identifies the “chaos” of Ge 1:2 with the condition of the cosmos before creation. The *Creatio ex Nihilo* Model, in turn, as-

¹ Bruce Waltke, “The First Seven Days: What is the Creation Account Trying to Tell Us?” *CT* 32 (1988): 42.

² Bruce Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part II: The Restitution Theory.” *BS* 132 (1975): 136. In his later article (idem, “The First Creation Seven Days: What is the Creation Account Trying to Tell Us?” *CT* 32 [1988]: 42-46), the author delineates the views of Rashi and Ibn Ezra as the fourth model.

³ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), 46, points out: “The sequence of particular declarations in vv. 1-3 comprises a wealth of references whose fullness is scarcely to be comprehended.”

⁴ Rashi puts Ge 1:2 in parentheses, thus trying to exclude it from exegetical considerations; the contemporary evangelical scholarship tries to “de-parentthesize” Rashi’s suggestion.

cribes to Gen 1:1 the same “chaos” as in Ge 1:2. In all three models, there are at least two unsolved problems: (1) the problem of the creation of imperfect “chaos” by a perfect God, and (2) the problem of the pre-existence of everlasting matter, which makes God merely the craftsman of the universe.

Before dealing with these problems and thus configuring the fourth model of creation, we are going to discuss in detail the three currently existing models.

1.1. Model One: Restitution Theory

According to the proponents of this view, the statement of Ge 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” consists of an independent sentence describing the original, perfect creation, which occurred for the first time millions of years ago. Ge 1:2 represents an independent sentence describing the condition of the created universe after the fall of Satan. Ge 1:3, in its turn, is interpreted as an independent sentence describing the first step of re-creation done by God, which He started around 4000 years ago.

At the time of the original perfect creation (Ge 1:1), Satan ruled the world. But later he rebelled against God, and the detailed picture of this rebellion, according to the restitutionists, occurs in Isa 14:9-14 and Ez 28:12-15.⁵ God punished the world for this sin and turned the perfect creation into chaos as narrated in Ge 1:2. The passage of Ge 1:3-31, on the other hand, reflects the process of God’s re-creation of the judged world. The proponents of the model insist: “Jeremiah 4:23-26, Isaiah 24:1, and 45:18, clearly indicate that the earth had undergone a cataclysmic change as the result of the divine judgement. The earth bears everywhere the marks of such a catastrophe.”⁶

This theory enables the exegete somehow to conform theology with scientific data.⁷ Also, the view has a considerable theological impact, explaining the otherwise mysterious career of Satan.⁸ At the same time, the view has many weak points and nowadays belongs to the past history, since argument that Ez 28:12-15 and Isa 14:9-14 prove that in Ge 1:2 God destroyed the earth was created by means of systematic thought rather than grounded firmly in Ge 1.

⁵ *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Hayne, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (London: Tynedale Press, 1964), 7, n. 1; quoted in Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part II,” 138.

⁸ *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 726, says: “This tremendous passage works the beginning of sin in the universe.”

1.2. Model Two: Pre-creation Chaos Theory

⁹ See, Edward J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers Co., 1964), esp. 9-14; Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988); Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); Bruce Waltke, *Creation and Chaos* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974).

¹⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 117.

¹¹ Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 74.

¹² Ibid., 103.

¹³ Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*; idem, "The First Seven Days."

¹⁴ Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, 49; Hasel, "Recent Translations," 159.

¹⁵ Waltke, "Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3 Part IV," 337.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, 58.

¹⁸ Ibid., 27; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 106, 722.

¹⁹ Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory," *BS* 132 (1975): 221.

²⁰ Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, 44.

²¹ Idem, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part IV," 329.

This theory has been adopted by many commentators of the book of Genesis.⁹ It differs from the view of Restitution Theory in that the pre-creationists do not deny the possibility of chaos' eternal existence.¹⁰ Accordingly, God's creation includes basically the process of the transformation of eternal, unmolded matter into the ordered cosmos.¹¹ God is the Almighty Creator in the sense that by His Word, He transformed "chaos" into cosmos.¹²

First, the pre-creationists argue that Ge 1:1 constitutes a general declaration about creation; they build this argument on the points of similarity between Ge 1:1-3 and Ge 2:4-7, and between Ge 1:1-3 and the introduction to the *Enuma Elish*.¹³

Second, they argue that the word ברא ("created"), which occurs for the first time in Ge 1:1, does not denote the *creatio ex nihilo*, because the ancient Near East versions did not understand *creatio ex nihilo* to be the meaning of the word;¹⁴ ברא has been used in the Bible interchangeably with other verbal constructions as "to make," "to craft,"¹⁵ and calls attention to the marvelous creative acts of God not at all to creation out of nothing.¹⁶

Third, according to the pre-creationists, Ge 1:2 conveys negative information, so God is not responsible for the state of the universe described here.¹⁷ Such a chaotic condition cannot be called into existence by a perfect God, for Isa 45:18 clearly states that תהו was not created by God.¹⁸ Grammatically, Ge 1:2 should be subordinated to the immediately following v. 3.¹⁹

The fourth argument of the pre-creationists may be presented as follows: the Genesis creation accounts are quite similar to other ancient Near East cosmogonies in the sense that all of them assume the existence of chaos prior to creation.²⁰ In particular, the similarity between Ge 1:2 and the corresponding verse in the *Enuma Elish* is twofold: (1) formally, they both contain three adverbial clauses that carry a negative sense, and (2) in their content, both "present a primeval, dark, watery, and formless state prior to creation,..." and "both agree about the order of creation."²¹

The Pre-creation Chaos Theory has many critics who point out that the similarities between Ge 1:1-3 and Ge 2:4-7 exist, but the styles of narration in these two ac-

counts are different.²² The correlation between Ge1:1 and Ge 1:3 is different too: the luminaries have already been included in the phrase “heaven and earth,” in Ge 1:1, and Ge 1:3 depicts “...the sun’s breaking through the morning darkness...” as described in Ge 44:3, Ex 10:23, and Ne 8:3.²³ Ge 2:4 has a chiasmic structure, which cannot be said of Ge 1:1; the analogy becomes exact if the line of comparison is drawn between Ge 1:1-3 and Ge 2:4b-7.²⁴ Also, the interchangeability of the word בָּרָא (Ge 1:1) is in doubt: the only subject of this verb in the Bible is God, and it is a distinct word for creation.²⁵ This word “never takes the accusative of the material from which a thing is made...”²⁶ Also, the critics of this model argue that if Moses wanted to convey a general summary in Ge 1:1, he would not begin with “in the beginning,” because this word denotes something more.²⁷ They argue that the binary opposition “heaven and earth” reflects the physical world in its totality, the world that has been created by God, who is the Creator of everything.²⁸

Bruce Waltke, one of the leading scholars defending pre-creationism, tries to “de-parenthesize” Ge 1:2 insisting on a negative sense to this verse.²⁹ In our view, the verse must surely be “de-parenthesized,” but understood as positive explaining the unprecedented nature of God’s creation expressed in the unit of Ge 1:1-2. In this case, the compound “formless and empty” does not denote chaos, but conveys the sense that the earth was not yet ready to be inhabited by humankind.³⁰ The same, but more detailed sense is conveyed in Ge 2:5-6: “formless and empty” refers to the condition of the land in its “not yet” state, before God made it “good.”³¹ The compound “formless and empty” does not suggest a chaotic condition; rather, it refers to a state of “aridness and unproductiveness” as in Jer 4:23, “desolation” in Isa 34:11.³² Thus the force of the compound “formless and empty” as a “negative” designation has been overestimated by the pre-creationists.³³ The word “darkness” in Ge 1:2 as a part of God’s creation should bear a positive sense,³⁴ and, accordingly, Ge 1:2 should be considered in the united block of Ge 1:1-2.³⁵ If “Spirit of God” (Ge 1:2) obviously has a positive meaning,³⁶ the word “darkness,” from the same verse, has the same positive meaning.³⁷ The “darkness” is a stage in God’s creative scheme, consisting of a description of the night in oppo-

²² Mark F. Rooker, “Genesis 1:1-3; Creation or Re-Creation? Part 2,” *BS* 49 (1992), 414.

²³ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 97.

²⁴ Harry M. Orlinsky, “The New Jewish Version of Torah: Toward a New Philosophy of Bible Translation,” *JBL* 82 (1963): 253; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1964), 12.

²⁵ Rooker, “Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 2,” 417; see also, Thomas J. Finley, “Dimensions of the Hebrew word ‘Create’ (arb),” *BS* 148 (1991): 409.

²⁶ Julian Morgenstein, “The Sources of the Creation Story – Genesis 1:1-2:4,” *AJSLL* 36 (1919/20): 201; see also, Carl H. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1942), 40-41; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, 49-51..

²⁷ Hasel, “Recent Translations,” 165.

²⁸ Michael Deroche, “Isaiah XLV 7 and the Creation of Chaos?” *VT* XVII, 1 (1992): 20.

²⁹ In the recent scholarship, the Rashi’s parenthetic understanding of Gen1:2 has been advocated by Orlinsky and Speiser.

³⁰ Rooker, “Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 1,” 320-23; idem, “Creation or Re-Creation? Part 2,” 420.

³¹ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 84-5.

³² David T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Water in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation* (Sheffield: Academic Press Ltd., 1989), 33-4.

³³ Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 1," 320.

³⁴ Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 2," 423.

³⁵ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 102, 106.

³⁶ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 87.

³⁷ Iswyn Blythin, "A Note on Genesis I 2," *VT* 12 (1962): 121; N. Wyatt, "The Darkness of Genesis I 2," *VT* XLIII, 4 (1993): 547.

³⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 114.

³⁹ Martin Luther, *the Creation: A Commentary on First Five Chapters of the Book of Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858), 23.

⁴⁰ Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part III," 217.

⁴¹ Unger, "Rethinking the Genesis Account of Creation," 27.

⁴² Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, 102-7.

⁴³ Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 248-9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 249-50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

sition to the light which is a description of the day itself appearing in the following verses (Ge 1:4, 5, 18).³⁸ In other words, the "darkness" in Ge 1:2 is used as a binary opposition to the "light" of Ge 1:3, and both words constitute a compound "darkness and light."

1.3. Model Three: *Creatio Ex Nihilo* Theory

Historically speaking, this model underwent many modifications and changes, but the main theological idea remained unchanged, that: "...the world began, and was made of God, out of nothing."³⁹ This view affirms God's existence before creation and the potential of life in the matter created.⁴⁰ Accordingly, the expression "in the beginning" refers to the absolute beginning of the material universe denoted by the phrase "heaven and earth."⁴¹

In earlier exegesis, the word ברא ("created," Ge 1:1) has been perceived as denoting *per se* creation out of nothing.⁴² Modern interpreters consider the meaning of ברא and the concept *ex nihilo* as separate issues: "By itself, *bara* would probably not mean all that the concept of 'creation from nothing' entails. Within the context of Genesis 1, however, it would have been the most appropriate Hebrew term available."⁴³ The researchers do not deny that ברא in Ge 1:1 intends the *ex nihilo* for the following reasons: (1) the "beginning" in the absolute state suggests an origin, a starting point; (2) the verse does not tell anything about the "beginning" of God, and this implies that "God existed 'before beginning' – hence, eternally – and that the material did not."⁴⁴

Inlike to the pre-creationists, the proponents of the *Ex Nihilo Theory* suggest a confessional, not merely a formal reading of Ge 1:1. The sense of the passage is similar to Jer 10:11-12 and Ps 96:5, and it influenced later biblical writings such as Jn 1:3 and Heb 11:3.⁴⁵

Some proponents of *ex nihilo* insist that Ge 1:2 describes the condition of the land before God prepared it for human beings, and that the unit of Ge 1:2-2:3 tells about this preparation.⁴⁶ Accordingly, "formless and empty" (Ge 1:2) does not describe a chaotic condition, but rather "...stretch of wasteland, a wilderness not yet inhabitable by human beings."⁴⁷

Also, the proponents say that the *ex nihilo* model has strong biblical grounds.⁴⁸ In the narrative of the first

chapter of Genesis (more exactly Ge 1:1-2:3), this model is not presented explicitly, but is implicit: the passage of Isa 40:21 consists of the intra-biblical, explicit reference to an absolute beginning, presented in Ge 1:1.⁴⁹ Throughout the Scripture, God is presented as the Creator and the ultimate Source of the totality of all existing things (Ro 11:36; 1Co 8:6; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Rev 1:8; 4:11; Pr 8:22-23; Jn 1:3); as a self-sufficient and eternal Being (Ps 102:25-27; Isa 44:24; 45:18; 46:9; 48:12).⁵⁰ God's Word alone brought the universe into existence (Ps 33:6, 9).⁵¹

Heb 11:3 affirms the *ex nihilo*, denying that "the created universe originated from primeval material and anything observable."⁵² The expression "Word of God" also does not correspond well with the idea of pre-existing matter.⁵³

The critics of the model admit that *ex nihilo* is the only model able to satisfy the strictly monotheistic view of the Bible.⁵⁴ At the same time, they raise two objections to the view: first, they point out that the compound "heaven and earth" never has the meaning of disorderly chaos, but always of an ordered world, and thus does not correspond well with the statement in Ge 1:2;⁵⁵ and second, that it is a logical contradiction that God first "created" (Ge 1:1) chaos when this chaos was the state of the universe before creation.⁵⁶

From an evangelical perspective, there are three ways to hand the objection: (1) to theologize beyond the framework of *ex nihilo*; this possibility has been held by B. Waltke; (2) to assign the expression "heaven and earth" a more plausible meaning suitable to the "disorder" of Ge 1:2; this possibility has been held by Luther, and embraced in modern times by G. Wenham and M. Rooker;⁵⁷ and (3) to eliminate exegetically the "chaotic" perception of Ge 1:2; this was taken into consideration by Albert M. Wolters, John H. Sailhamer, and David Tsumura,⁵⁸ who insist that the expression "formless and empty" does not mean "chaos,"⁵⁹ but the condition of the land before God made it "good."⁶⁰ Sailhamer, particularly, has insisted, that Ge 1:1 "not only identifies the Creator but also explains the origin of the world,"⁶¹ and, accordingly, the "formless and empty" condition of the earth in Ge 1:2 does not mean a return to primeval chaos.

⁴⁶ Idem, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 84.

⁴⁷ Ibid., n. 8.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁹ Eichrodt, "In the Beginning," 67.

⁵⁰ Copan, "Is *Creatio Ex Nihilo* a Post-Biblical Invention?" 89-90.

⁵¹ Ibid., 90.

⁵² William L. Lane, *Hebrews*, WBC, vol. 2 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1991), 332.

⁵³ Paul Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1993), 569.

⁵⁴ Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3. Part III," 216.

⁵⁵ Brevard S. Childs, "The Enemy from the North and the Chaotic tradition," *JBL* 78 (1959): 197.

⁵⁶ Hasel, "Recent Translations," 164.

⁵⁷ M. Luther, *The Creation: A Commentary on the First Five Chapters of the Book of Genesis*, 27; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 15; Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 1," 316-23.

⁵⁸ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1996); Sailhamer, *Genesis*; idem, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*; D. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters*, 86-92.

⁵⁹ Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview*, 19-20.

⁶⁰ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 24.

⁶¹ Idem, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 83.

2. Model Four: A Possible Configuration

The starting point of the fourth model may be presented as follows: the two beginning chapters of Genesis (more exactly Ge 1:1-2:3 and Ge 2:4-25) consist of two narratives about the same creation, which are told from different angles. This is the usual Hebrew pattern: to present the general summary first, followed by a detailed description.⁶²

⁶² Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part I, From Adam to Noah: Genesis I-IV 8*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1964), 91.

For example, in Ge 28:10ff., the narrator intentionally describes in detail Jacob's trip to Haran even though Jacob is already in Haran, according to the previous passage (Ge 28:5). The same pattern is observable in Ge 22: God's request to Abraham in v. 2 is followed by a detailed presentation of the actions of Abraham (Ge 22:2ff.).

The same pattern is observable when we compare portions of Ge 1:1-2:4a and Ge 2:4b-25. Michael Fishbane points out that the second portion,

“...purports to provide, retrospectively, new details concerning the creation just described. ...The narrative moves swiftly from the time of creation ‘before’ man (vv. 4b-6) to the time of his creation and placement in the earthly paradise of Eden (vv. 7-15).”⁶³

⁶³ Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (N. Y.: Schocken Books, 1979), 17.

Gordon J. Wenham points out that the so-called “J” and “P” sources behind the creation texts “...[are] much... closer to each other than is usually held.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” *PWCJS* 9 (1986): 24.

2.1. Co-ordination of the Creation Accounts

Our starting points may be presented as follows:

- (1) The connection between the two creation accounts (Ge 1:1-2:3 and Ge 2:4-25) is complementary;⁶⁵
- (2) The division between the accounts has been crafted by the author of the Pentateuch intentionally, so that each account has its own strategic development throughout the Pentateuch;
- (3) This strategy is observable in regard to such Pentateuchal topics as “blessing and curse,” “good and evil” (first account), and “these are the generations,” “life and death,” and “food” (second account).

⁶⁵ VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption*, 42.

2.2. Genesis Chapter One and the Pentateuch

2.2.1. “Blessing and Curse”

In the Pentateuch, there are sixteen passages which spell out the compound “blessing and curse” verbally: Ge 1:22; 1:28; 2:3; 3:14-19; 4:11; 9:1; 9:25; 9:26; 12:1-3; 17:16; 17:20; 24:60; 25:11; 27:27-29; 39:5, and Dt 30:15-20.

Ge 1-3 consists of a paradigm in which “blessing” is connected with creation before the Fall, and “curse” with the post-Fall creation. In Ge 4-11, Noah and Shem are “blessed,” while Cain and Canaan are “cursed.” In Ge 12:1-3, the promise to Abram can be traced back to Ge 1-3: the promise itself as a promise of restoration of conditions before the Fall. Strategically, the parallel goes between the presentation of God’s calling Noah out of the ark in Ge 8:15-20 and the calling of Abraham in Ge 12:1-7: the theme of new beginning harmonizes the images of Noah and Abraham.⁶⁶ The Ge 8:20-9:17 passage, which stands between the passages about Noah’s and Abram’s calls, consists of an account of the covenant, thus connecting compositionally and theologically the original creation and the establishment of the covenant.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 91.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

On the other hand, the Ge 3:14-19 portion consists of a series of “curses” used in contrast to the “blessings” in Ge 1:1-2:3 (i.e., in Ge 1:22; 28; 2:3). In the unfolding composition of the Pentateuch, in Ge 49, Nu 23-24, and Dt 33, the reversal of the original “blessed” condition occurs. The literary strategy unfolds according to the following scheme: “blessing” – “cursing” – reversed “blessing.”⁶⁸ In this regard, the connection between the reversed curse of Jer 4:23 and the Ge 1:2 passage’s “chaos” cannot be substantiated: such a reversal is possible because God is Almighty, but at the same time, it is impossible for God has already promised Noah to preserve the earth (Ge 8:20-22).

⁶⁸ «Reversed» means returning to the original blessed condition.

2.2.2. “Good and Evil”

The topic of “good and evil” has also been used by the Pentateuch’s narrator selectively in order to compose the form of the first creation account.

The creation before the Fall (Ge 1) is described as being “good” (Ge 1:4, 10, 18, 21, 25, and 31). The following narrative contrasts “good” and “evil,” thus unfolding the composition in antithetical tension with Ge 1: Ge 2:9, 12,

18; 6:5; 12:16; 26:29; 32:12; 41:22-24; 45:18; 50:20; Ex 1:20; Nu 10:29; 14:7; 24:5; Dt 3:25, 30:15-20. Humankind's "evil" heart is mentioned twice in Ge 6:5, compositionally opposed to the language of "good" in Ge 1. The general conclusion in Ge 1-11 is that the "good" creation became "evil." Yet, in the context of the entire book of Genesis, this "good" is not lost forever: in the following patriarchal narratives that follow (Ge 12-50) the patriarchs, themselves their families, and their descendants are identified as people abiding in "goodness."

Interestingly enough, the reversal here is similar to the one in regard to the "blessing" and "curse:" "good" — "evil" — reversed "good" (i.e., reversal of "evil" into "good"). More than that, both topics — "good and evil" and "blessing and curse" — start in the same Ge 1 and come together again in Dt 30:15-20: Israel, like Adam and Eve, can choose "blessing" or "curse," "good" or "evil," "obedience" or "disobedience."

2.3. Genesis Chapter Two and the Pentateuch

2.3.1. *"These Are the Generations"*

The expression "these are the generations" (תולדות) is used throughout the Pentateuch repeatedly, but beyond Genesis it is used only once in Nu 3:1 in strong correspondence to its first occurrence in Ge 2:4:

Ge 2:4 This is the account (תולדות) of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Nu 3:1 This is the account (תולדות) of the family of Aaron and Moses at the time the Lord talked with Moses on Mount Sinai.

In the Hebrew text, the parallel between these two verses is as follows:

- (1) The passage in Nu 3:1 replaces "heavens and earth" with "Aaron and Moses," and "made the earth and the heavens" with "talked with Moses on Mount Sinai," while the expressions "at the time the Lord" and "this is the account" are the same in both passages;
- (2) The Hebrew words "Moses" (משה) and "heavens" (שמים), "Aaron" (אהרן) and "earth" (ארץ), share strong consonant similarities.

The author of the Pentateuch points out here that Covenantal Israel is a means to restore the new (reversed) creation of “heavens and the earth.”⁶⁹

2.3.2. “Life and Death”

The verbal parallel expression “life and death” is carried throughout the Pentateuch: Ge 2:9; 2:17; 3:24; 7:3; 45:5; Lev 18:5; Nu 14:38; Dt 30:15-20.

Note that together with the expressions “blessings and curses” and “good and evil” discussed above, this phrase also reaches its literary culmination in Dt 30:15-20. “Life and death” discloses the literary strategy of the second chapter of Genesis, while the other two expressions mentioned relate to the strategy of the first chapter.

2.3.3. “Food”

Another term that determines the form of the composition of Ge 2:4-25 is the word “food.” As a verbal construction, this word occurs in the following passages of the Pentateuch: Ge 2:9; 2:17; 3:17-19; 8:11; 9:3; 9:20; Ex 10:15; 16:1-21; 23:25; Lev 11:1-47; 19:23; 25:18; 26:1-46; Nu 11:7; and Dt 28:3-14. In the Old Testament, the words “food” and “life” have been used interchangeably.⁷⁰ The idea of a direct connection between obedience and sufficient “food” already occurs in the second creation account (Ge 2:9 and Ge 2:17).

The strategic disclosure of the intent of the author of the second account is undertaken in a particularizing and anthropomorphizing manner: in Lev 26:1-46, the creation covenant (Ge 2) is anthropomorphized as the covenants with Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham (v. 42a), and connected with the fourth covenant for the land (v. 42b, 43). The particularization of Dt 28:3-14 completes the Pentateuchal composition in regard to “food.”

2.3.4. The Fourth Model

The theme of the Almighty Creator of “the heavens and the earth” couples the verbal compositions discussed above into the unified design of the Pentateuch. There is a sharp, intentional contrast between the first two verses of the Bible, as well as between the first two chapters of the Bible. At the same time, there is a striking correspondence

⁶⁹ Eric W. Bolger, “The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch,” Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993, 215-6.

⁷⁰BDB, 37-8, 536-7.

among the verses and the chapters of the Pentateuch, so that the theological significance of this correspondence prevails over the contrast. In other words, the contrast reveals more clearly concordance and theological unity of the Pentateuch:

- (1) The topic of “order” unifies Ge 1:1-2:3 and Ge 1:1.
- (2) The topic of “chaos” unifies, in its own order, Ge 2:4-25 and Ge 1:2.
- (3) The topic of “order” (Ge 1:1-2:3 and Ge 1:1) goes beyond the book of Genesis developing its own strategy within the Pentateuch:
 - A) The theme of “blessing and curse” (Ge 1:22, 28, through Dt 30:15-20);
 - B) The theme of “good and bad” (Ge 1:4, 10, 18, 21, 25, 31, through Dt 30:15-20).
- (4) The topic of “chaos” (Ge 2:4-25 and Ge 1:2) also leaves the framework of Genesis and develops within the Pentateuch:
 - A) The theme of “these are the generations” (Ge 2:4 through Nu 3:1);
 - B) The theme of “life and death” (Ge 2:9, 17 through Dt 30:15-20);
 - C) The theme of “food” (Ge 2:9, 17 through Dt 28:3-14).

Schematically, it may be presented as follows:

Theme of the Almighty Creator (Genesis-Deuteronomy)	
“Order” (Ge 1:1-2:3 and Ge 1:1): (1) “blessing and curse”; (2) “good and evil”.	“Chaos” (Ge 2:4-25 and Ge 1:2): (1) “these are the generations”; (2) “life and death”; (3) “food”.
Thematic fusion (Deuteronomy 28-30)	

⁷¹ The Deut 28-30 passage consists of the thematic unit, where Moses tells Israel about blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, and admonishes the people to choose the first.

All these topics come together in Dt 28-30 even though they started in different *loci*.⁷¹ Thus, the contrast has been created intentionally by the author of the Pentateuch in binary manner (“order” and “chaos”), in order to disclose the theme of the Almighty Creator more expressively.

Conclusion

The view of the proponents of the *Creatio ex Nihilo* Model of creation (model three in our discussion) has an exegetical problem in the form of a sharp contradiction between the “chaos” of Ge 1:2 and the “order” of Ge 1:1. The fourth model of creation configured in our work is able, in our view, to solve this problem, while not denying the main tenets of *creatio ex nihilo*.

The theological significance of Ge 1:1-2:3 and Ge 2:4-25 as two independent presentations of one and the same creation done from different angles, is understandable only from the standpoint of their independent literary development in the Pentateuch. At the same time, each presentation represents a complementary half of one theologically indissoluble unit, because both presentations come together in the same significant passage of Dt 28-30.

In other words, the difference between the two representations of creation upon which all the liberal interpretations of the book of Genesis are based, was created by Moses intentionally, in order to show more expressively the grandeur of the work done by Almighty God, the Creator of the universe. The same, but more subtle, intention of Moses is observable in the contrast between Ge 1:1 and Ge 1:2: the first verse of the Bible is a one-verse representation of the whole of Ge 1:1-2:3, while the second represents the whole of Ge 2:4-25. We may conclude that *creatio ex nihilo* is not only doctrinal, but the Biblical principle according to which the world was created.

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